



EXPLORING AMERICA

Christopher Columbus was born in 1451 in Genoa, Italy. His father was a weaver. He and his brother moved to Portugal and became chartmakers. At fourteen, Christopher went to sea. As a young man, he lived in Portugal. His wife died in 1485 and Columbus moved, with his son Diego, to Spain.

Columbus believed that the world was round. So he thought that by sailing west, he would arrive in Asia. No one knew about the existence of North and South America at that time. Christopher Columbus approached the King of Portugal and the King and Queen of Spain for 10 years trying to get them to finance his exploration to Asia.

Finally, King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella of Spain decided to give Columbus the ships, men and supplies he needed. In return, he promised to bring back gold, spices and silks from the Far East. He told them that he would spread Christianity and lead an expedition to China. Columbus asked for and got the title "admiral of the ocean seas" and became governor of all discovered lands. So it was, that Columbus departed Palo, Spain on August 3, 1492 with three ships: Pinta, Niña, and Santa Maria. There were 104 men and their first stop was the Canary Islands, off the west coast of Africa, where they made some repairs and took on new supplies.

On September 6, 1492, they set sail across the Atlantic Ocean, traveling about 150 miles a day. Most of Columbus's men believed the earth was flat and that they might fall off the end, be eaten by sea monsters or be sucked into a whirlpool. It was all Columbus could do to keep them in line.

He offered a reward to the one who sighted land first.

Christopher Columbus



*Replica of the Santa Maria located on the Scioto River in Columbus, Ohio
Wikipedia / Bcirker*

On October 12, a sailor sighted land in the present-day Bahamas. Columbus thought he had reached an island off of Asia. He called the island San Salvador.

Columbus did not find the riches he was after so he continued sailing and visited Cuba and an island later called Hispaniola (Haiti and Dominican Republic). He called the native people Indians because he thought that they were from the Indies. The Indians were friendly.

The captain of the Pinta decided to go exploring on his own. Not long after that, the Santa Maria ran aground and not all of the men could fit onboard the remaining Niña. So, Columbus left 40 men behind in a fort on Hispaniola and set sail for Spain.

It didn't take long for Columbus to gather more men, ships and supplies to continue his explorations in 1493, (2nd Voyage) Columbus established the first Spanish colony known as Santo Domingo, in 1498 (3rd Voyage) Columbus took a southern route and discovered the islands of Trinidad, Tobago, Grenada, and Margarita, and in 1502 (4th Voyage) sailed west and landed in present-day Panama.

Queen Isabella died in 1504. Columbus asked King Ferdinand to reinstate him as the governor of Hispaniola but the king declined. In 1506, Columbus died. He believed he had set foot in Asia but he was disappointed that he never found the riches there.

Brooks Widmaier/Fairfax County Public Schools



One of three stamps commemorating the 1804-06 Lewis and Clark Expedition, Photo © AP Images

AMERICAN EXPLORERS

LEWIS, CLARK and SACAJAWEA



One of three stamps commemorating the 1804-06 Lewis and Clark Expedition, Photo © AP Images

Meriwether Lewis and William Clark are regarded to have been the greatest American explorers. Interestingly, behind the journey which made them so famous lay a dream similar to the one Columbus had 300 years before: to find a waterway westward. This time, however, the starting point was the U.S. South, not Europe, and the waterway - great American rivers, not oceans.

Growing need for exploration

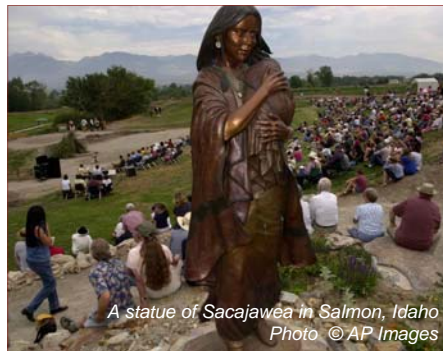
In the beginning of the 19th century marks the United States made the important acquisition of the Louisiana Territory from France. A huge area of 800,000 square miles, now including 15 states, had been poorly explored. Planning future economic development of the territory, President Thomas Jefferson needed maps. But most of all he hoped for a waterway that would enable American traders to ship their goods north and then west to the Pacific Ocean.

Preparation - half-way to success

The most famous American inland expedition named the **Corps of Discovery** began on May 14, 1804 and lasted over two years. Meriwether Lewis, Jefferson's private secretary, was appointed the leader, but he recruited William Clark, his friend from the military service and a Virginian compatriot, to accompany him as the co-leader. They had been given scientific training to cope with the tasks that awaited them on the journey: draw maps, determine their position and direction by means of celestial observation and use scientific instruments available at the time such as the octant, chronometer, sextant and compass. Using some of these instruments required long and tiresome upkeep,

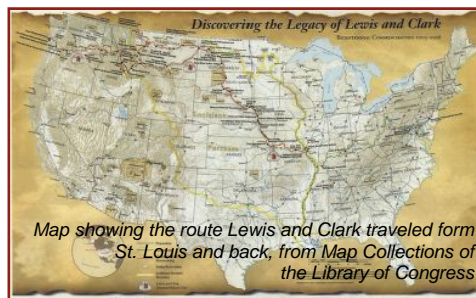
for example a chronometer (or clock) had to be wound each day at noon, which must have been a nuisance for the travelers on their arduous journey.

From soldiers to diplomats



A statue of Sacajawea in Salmon, Idaho. Photo © AP Images

An equally demanding task was to gather and store information about the fauna and flora of the territories traversed. And so the two men, educated in the soldiers' profession, had to become experts in natural sciences, navigation, organization and ... diplomacy, which was indeed of utmost importance during this expedition. The lives of the ninety members of the Corps of Discovery depended on their leaders' skill to introduce themselves



and present the goal of their mission to the Indian tribes, through whose territories they were passing.

You live in the United States

The mission was a peaceful one. One of its goals was to inform the

Indians that the whole territory had passed from the French into the American hands. Lewis and Clark had with them American flags and Jefferson medals depicting two hands clasped in friendship. These were offered to the chiefs as presents.

Indebted to Nez Perce

The Indians were friendly as well. Indeed, at the time of a crisis, when the group was exhausted and starving while crossing the Lolo Trail in the Bitterroot Mountains (Idaho), the Nez Perce Indians saved the explorers' lives by giving them food and shelter, and when the travelers had to leave their horses behind, they cared for the animals until they returned from the Pacific shores, where they spent the winter of 1805.

A token of peace

And yet the most invaluable Indian, the "safe-conduct" for the whole expedition was a woman named **Sacajawea**, one of the two wives of French trader Toussaint Charbonneau who accompanied the Corps of Discovery as a translator. She gave birth to a son on the journey and she traveled with the explorers all the way to the Pacific and back. She was a safe-guard for, as Clark wrote in his journal, "a woman with a party of men is a token of peace."

Vital discovery

The explorers brought back maps, journals and materials for scientific analysis and the most vital discovery that a waterway passage to the Pacific did not exist.

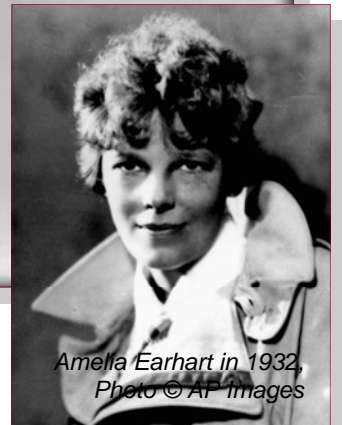
Text by AIRC, Krakow.
Edited by IRC Madrid



Amelia Earhart, 40, stands next to a Lockheed Electra 10E, before her last flight in 1937 from Oakland, Calif., Photo © AP Images

FIRST WOMAN TO FLY OVER THE ATLANTIC

AMELIA EARHART & Her Last Flight



Amelia Earhart in 1932, Photo © AP Images

If Christopher Columbus is a man with two graves - one tomb in Seville, Spain and the other, in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic - **Amelia Earhart**, a great explorer of the skies, has none. The mystery of her disappearance about 7,000 miles before completing an attempted circumnavigation of the world, which no other woman had tried before her, has never been solved. Neither her body nor her plane, the twin engine Lockheed Electra, have ever been found though a huge rescue operation that cost \$4 million was launched promptly upon the loss of radio contact and many people since have tried to find a clue to her fate.

The 1930s was the time when Amelia Earhart achieved her most spectacular successes: she set a world altitude record of 5613 m, she was the first woman to fly solo across the Atlantic, and she was the first person to make a solo flight across the Pacific (from Honolulu to Oakland, California). The 1930s was also the time of great advancement in aviation and yet technological feats such as GPS systems were still a long way off. Pilots relied on navigators, who had to rely on celestial observation and maps, which were often inaccurate. Flying a plane and navigating a ship still had an element of uncertainty and adventure; a romantic tinge of being an explorer of the unknown and of challenging and having to fight the primeval forces of nature.

Successful and praised for her achievements, Amelia Earhart was preparing for the challenge of her life

- a flight around the world. As she was used to hardships and setbacks, she disregarded what a more superstitious pilot might have treated as a warning sign: her plane crashed on takeoff for the around the world attempt in March 1937. Instead of being put off, the aviatrix had her Lockheed Electra repaired. She said, "I have a feeling that there is just about one more good flight left in my system and I hope this trip is it."

In June that same year the plane was fit to fly and with navigator Fred Noonan, Earhart set off. A month later when they had covered about 3/4 of the distance the tragic moment came. They set course for the small Howland Island located southwest of Honolulu, Hawaii, but they never made it. A ship that was positioned near the island to serve as radio contact lost communication with the plane. Nine ships and 66 aircraft combed the area of the Pacific where Earhart's plane was supposed to have gone down. Alas, in vain.

That Amelia Earhart realized what risk she was running is evident from a letter she sent to her husband George Putnam shortly before the fatal flight. The letter was published in a book "Last Flight":

"Please know I am quite aware of the hazards...I want to do it because I want to do it. Women must try to do things as men have tried. When they fail their failure must be but a challenge to others."

Activity Page

Find answers to activities on this page at www.embusa.es/irc/zoom.html

Win a Prize!

October 2006 contest:
**What does a
chronometer
measure?**

Send your answer to
irc@embusa.es

Give your name and
address. The deadline
is **November 15**

Answer to "Win a Prize"
in the Summer 2006
issue: 6,193.54 meters
(1 foot = 0.3048 meters)

Book prizes will be sent
to you by mail.

EXERCISE 1 Three sentences have been removed from the text below. Put them back in the appropriate place.

Columbus Day is the annual U.S. commemoration of Christopher Columbus's landing in the New World (at San Salvador island, also known as Watling Island, today part of the British Bahamas) on October 12, 1492. (1) Viking sailors are believed to have established a short-lived settlement in Newfoundland sometime in the 11th Century, and scholars have argued for a number of other possible pre-Columbian landings.

.... (2)

A number of nations celebrate this encounter with annual holidays: Discovery Day in the Bahamas, National Holiday in Spain, and Día de la Raza in much of Latin America.

.... (3) In the United States, Columbus Day is typically a celebration of Italian and Italian-American cultural heritage, Columbus generally being considered a native of Genoa.

a. Columbus, however, initiated the lasting encounter between Europeans and the indigenous peoples of the Western Hemisphere.

b. In 1971, Congress moved the U.S. holiday from October 12 to the second Monday in October, to afford workers a long holiday weekend.

c. Columbus was not the first European successfully to cross the Atlantic.

Fragment from the text about Columbus Day on USINFO.STATE.GOV website

Glossary -

(in the order of appearance)

Chartmarker - a person who draws or makes maps designed to assist navigation by air or sea.

Whirlpool - water moving rapidly in a circle so as to produce a depression in the center into which objects may be drawn.

Caravel - a small, highly maneuverable, three-mast ship able to go up river

To run aground - hit or reach the ground.

Acquisition - something that was bought or obtained

Compatriot - person from the same country

Upkeep - process of keeping something in good condition

Arduous - difficult and tiring

Traverse - go across

Depict - show in a work of art

Safe-conduct - allowed to travel safely

Token - a small thing or action which is meant to show special intentions or feelings

Circumnavigation - sailing or flying around the world

Altitude - height above the sea level

Primeval - from a very early period in history

Aviatrix - a woman pilot

EXERCISE 2 Here are some verbs connected with TRAVELING & EXPLORING. Make them into nouns :

1. explore, 2. discover, 3. invent, 4. travel, 5. hike, 6. fly, 7. navigate, 8. survive, 9. sail, 10. cruise, 11. depart, 12. arrive, 13. board, 14. embark

EXERCISE 3 Can you guess the meaning of these idioms:

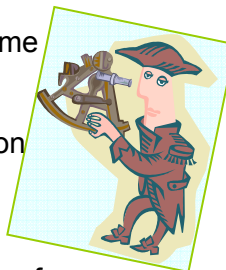
1. travel light
2. survival of the fittest
3. with flying colors

SPEAKING ACTIVITY:

On the world's map show:

1. the route Christopher Columbus took in his famous voyage of 1492,
2. the path Lewis and Clark traveled
3. one of Amelia Earhart's flights.

While pointing the routes on the map talk about the trip: its goals, length, problems, achievements, etc.



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IN ON THE USA

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www.embusa.es/irc/zoom.html

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